

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Indian Health Service

Refer to: OHR

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE CIRCULAR No."45-05

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE POLICY FOR HANDLING LOSS OF LIFE
OF AN INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE EMPLOYEE

Section:

1. Purpose
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3. Authority and Responsibility
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5. Effective Date

1. PURPOSE.

It is the intent of this policy to ensure that surviving family members dealing with the loss of life of an Indian Health Service (IHS) employee, whether occurring on or off the job, are provided the most current and accurate information on available benefits in a timely, supportive, considerate, and kind manner.

2. OBJECTIVES.

To establish a line of communication in the event of the loss of life of an IHS employee.

3. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

The Director, IHS, is responsible for identifying persons at a national level trained in handling loss of life situations for all IHS employees. These contacts will be responsible for training and assisting Area designated liaisons dealing with loss of life situations of employees. The Director will receive a report from each Area Director on a yearly basis outlining the Area's organization and contact persons for dealing with these situations.

The Area Director and the Associate Director, Office of Human Resources (OHR), are responsible for ensuring that a line of communication is established to provide assistance in the event of the loss of life of an IHS employee. A consolidated annual report will be prepared by the Director, OHR, for the Director, IHS reporting how each Area has accomplished the intent of this policy.

4. PROCEDURE.

A. Annual Notification:

Annual notification will be provided to all IHS employees regarding survivor benefits available to, their families as a result of their employment with the IHS. This notification will be initiated by the Director, OHR; activity will be reported in the annual report to the Director, IHS. Every attempt will be made to counsel employees on the need to be responsible to assure that their families are properly covered in the event of a loss of life.

B. Liaisons:

Each Area will designate at least one contact person for assisting families with appropriate information regarding government entitlement and benefits in the case of a loss of life of an IHS employee. This person will be a liaison between family survivors, the appropriate personnel system, and IHS staff to ensure that current and correct information is provided. In the case of loss of life this will be the person to whom questions are addressed and followup is delegated. Positions recommended to fulfill this function are the Area Commissioned Corps Liaison Officer for Commissioned Officers, and the Employee Relations Officer for Civil Service and Wage Grade employees.

c. Grief Counselling

Each Area will establish a grief counselling service to assist the surviving family and fellow employees through the initial grieving process in the event of a loss of life as a result of an on-the-job disaster. It is recommended that a team organized under the Mental Health program of each Area be established to provide short-term support to all affected IHS employees, families, and service population. Grief counselling activities are to be a part of the annual report to the Director, IHS.

D. Media Communications:

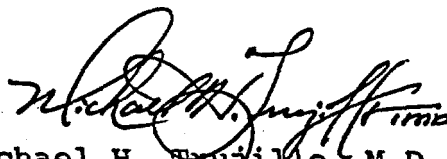
All communications with the media regarding any type of disaster or accident resulting in injury or the loss of life of an IHS employee will be referred to the IHS Communication Staff Office, IHS Headquarters Office, Room 6-35, Parklawn Building, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857, (301) 443-7261 or fax (301) 443-0507, in accordance with the July 1994 "IHS Communications Guidelines for Providing Information In Response to Media Requests."

D. Media Communications:

All communications with the media regarding any type of disaster or accident resulting in, injury or the loss of life of an IHS employee will be referred to the IHS Communication Staff Office, IHS Headquarters Office, Room 6-35, Parklawn Building, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857, (301) 443-7261 or fax (301) 443-0507, in accordance with the July 1994 "IHS Communications Guidelines for Providing Information In Response to Media Requests."

5. EFFECTIVE DATE:

This policy circular is effective upon the date of signature by the Director, IHS.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael H. Trujillo", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael H. Trujillo, M.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Surgeon General
Director, Indian Health Service